

Art-in-Architecture

A M E R I C A S O N G

Clyde Lynds' Sculpture
for the entrance of
the Federal Office Building
in New York City

C L Y D E L Y N D S

Acclaimed by curators and critics for his thoughtful union of aesthetic grace and technological precision, Clyde Lynds has developed a unique art form that integrates solid stone with light. His relief sculpture for the Federal Office Building expands his work, standing as a testament to the permanence of history, while engaging the viewer through a composition of poetic elements.

Lynds began his art career as a painter and subsequently became interested in manipulating light. In the early 1960s he developed ways to use fiber optics as a means of expression which led to his uniting them with concrete in 1972. Inspired by extensive travel, especially through the ruins and temples of Greece, Egypt, Mexico and Japan, he began combining monumental form with light. Since 1982 the combination of stone and light has formed the core of his work.

In an essay on Lynds' work, Art historian Eleanor Heartney has written that "(Lynds') public works tend to be more broad ranging in many of their references. They speak about the possibilities of shared experience and common understandings, bringing art back into the social world from which it has so often seemed to retreat in recent years."

The GSA commission augments Lynds' many other public art commissions, some of which are placed at the Institute of Marine and Coastal Sciences at Rutgers, New Brunswick, NJ; the United States Border Station, Nogales, AZ; Connecticut State Superior Court, Hartford, CT; New Jersey Memorial Soldier's Home, Vineland, NJ and Townsend Harris High School, Queens College, Queens, NY.

Clyde Lynds' sculpture can be found in prominent public collections including the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC; The Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, OH; The Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, CT; New York University, New York, NY; University of California, Santa Barbara, CA; the Jacksonville Art Museum, Jacksonville, FL and others.

Clyde Lynds believes that the vitality and intellectual progress of every great culture is mirrored in its public art — that public art should not just decorate but amplify the primary elements of its location. As part of the Federal Government's Art-in-Architecture Program, *America Song* defines the importance of its site while allowing intellectual and emotional access to its history and the architecture that stands there.



Clyde Lynds

AMERICA SONG, 1995

Federal Office Building

290 Broadway, New York City, New York

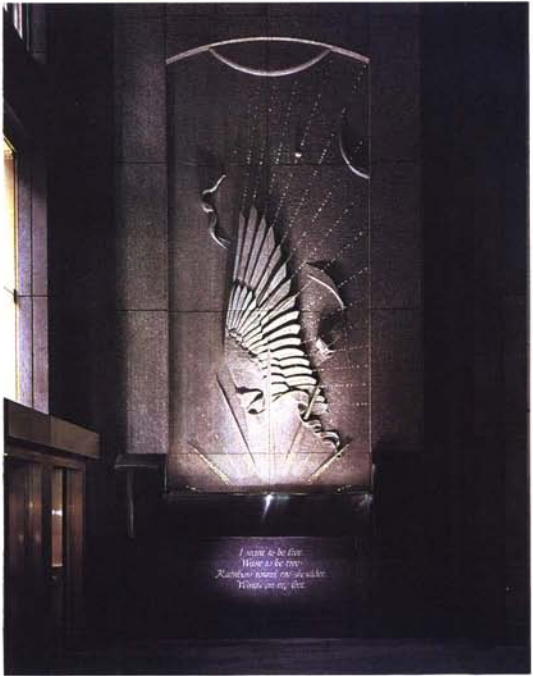
Concrete, Granite, Stainless Steel, Fiber Optics, Electronics

32' 6" High, 16' Wide, 30" Deep

The construction of the Federal Office Building became the focus of much attention when it was discovered that it was being built on a section of an African burial ground dating from colonial times. "America Song" pays homage to the people who were buried there while making a universal statement about freedom.

America Song is a relief sculpture installed on the Federal Office Building in New York City. An intrinsic part of the architecture that defines the main entrance to the building, the sculpture is a combination of carved stone, poetry and lighting effects.

Fabricated of reinforced concrete and stainless steel, the sculpture has fiber optic embedments. At night the fiber optics transmit moving light displays across the surface of the concrete from light sources contained in stainless steel panels alongside the sculpture.



The words of an anonymous African poet are sandblasted into the granite panels below the sculpture:

*I want to be free
Want to be free,
Rainbow 'round my shoulder
Wings on my feet.*

These words, in combination with a metaphor for freedom – a wing – emphasize all people's desire for freedom. At night, displays of moving light transform the sculpture, deepening the metaphor and enlivening the poet's words.

Flood lighting below and above the sculpture is programmed to create constant cycles of slowly dimming and brightening effects. As these changes alter the mood of the sculpture, fiber optics radiate points of light across its surface in alternating patterns and rhythms.

America Song combines poetic and sculptural elements that bring the history of the site forward, forming a powerful link between the site, the architecture and those who experience it.



*I want to be free.
Want to be free.
Rainbow round my shoulder.
Wings on my feet.*

T H E V A L U E of C R E

Art in Federal Buildings has been an American tradition since 1855 when Congress commissioned frescoes to be painted in committee rooms of the United States House of Representatives in Washington, D.C. Today the General Services Administration (GSA) proudly continues this heritage with the acquisition of fine art for Federal buildings through the Art-in-Architecture Program.

More than 170 works of art have been commissioned by GSA since the Art-in-Architecture Program was established in 1963. One of the most recent additions to this national collection is Clyde Lynds' sculpture for the entrance of the Federal Office Building in New York City.

Art commissioned by GSA reflects our nation's cherished commitment to individual expression and creativity. Historically, the United States has relied on individuals from all walks of life to challenge the present and create the future. Creativity has, from the drafting of the Constitution to the development of today's technology, been one of our most prized resources.

Thus, the public art that graces Federal Buildings portrays the spirit of the nation. It reflects the full range of our experiences, passions, expressions, and hopes. It is everything we are – sometimes serene, quiet, and introspective; at other times bold,

A T T I V E E X P R E S S I O N

confident, and unrestrained. Art commissioned through GSA's Art-in-Architecture is for everyone – local residents who come to a Federal Building on business and visitors who wish to see and enjoy the art. It is part of a heritage of creativity and individual expression preserved for all American citizens, those of today and the future.

The nomination and selection process for commissioning art in Federal Buildings follow guidelines established over the past 30 years.

One-half of one percent (00.5%) of the estimated construction cost of a new Federal Building is set aside for Art-in-Architecture projects. A Community Art Panel, composed of local art professionals, community representatives and the building's architect, makes recommendations to GSA about the type and locations of the artwork to be commissioned. The panel also reviews artists' portfolios and nominates a short list of artists to create the artwork.

GSA then selects and contracts one of the nominated artists to develop a design concept. The artist's proposal is reviewed by the panel, which submits a recommendation to GSA. After accepting the design proposal, GSA commissions the artwork.

GSA maintains a registry of artists who have expressed interest in commissions for Federal artwork. Artists who wish to be placed in the registry should contact:

Art-in-Architecture Program
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(202) 501-0048



U.S. General Services Administration
Public Buildings Service
New York